

[Eddie's Bar]

Beliefs and Customs - Folkstuff 18

FOLKLORE

NEW YORK Forms to be Filled out for Each Interview

FORM A Circumstances of Interview

STATE New York

NAME OF WORKER Ralph Ellison

ADDRESS 470 West 150 Street

DATE May 10, 1939

SUBJECT Harlem

1. Date and time of interview

April 30, 1939 8:00 P.M.

2. Place of interview

Eddie's Bar, St. Nicholas Avenue near 147 Street

3. Name and address of informant

4. Name and address of person, if any, who put you in touch with informant.

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Anonymous

5. Name and address of person, if any, accompanying you

6. Description of room, house, surroundings, etc.

Modernistic barroom, green walls, marine designs, Red imitation leather upholstery. Mirrors. Nickle phonograph in rear half of room where food is served. Bronze metal work, framed. Waiter and waitress, the former in black uniform, the latter in green. All of this in good taste.

FOLKLORE

NEW YORK

FORM C Text of Interview (Unedited)

STATE New York

NAME OF WORKER Ralph Ellison

ADDRESS 470 West 150 Street

DATE May 10, 1939

SUBJECT Harlem — Ahm In New York

Ahm in New York, but New York aint in me. You understand? Ahm in New York, but New York aint in me. What do I mean? Listen. Im from Jacksonville Florida. Been in New York twenty-five years. Im a New Yorker! But Im in New York an New York aint in me. Yuh understand? Naw, naw, yuh dont get me. Whut do they do; take Lenox Avenue. Take

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Seventh Avenue; take Sugar Hill! Pimps. Numbers. Cheating these poor people outa whut they got. Shooting, cutting, backbiting, all them things. Yuh see? Yuh see whut Ah mean? I'M in New York, but New York aint in me! Dont laugh, dont laugh. Ahm laughing but Ah dont mean it; it aint funny. Yuh see. Im on Sugar Hill, but Sugar Hill aint on me.

Ah come here twenty-five years ago. Bright lights, Pretty women. More space to move around. Son, if Ah had-a got New York in me Ahd a-been dead a long time ago. What happened the other night. Yuh heard about the shooting up here in the hill. Take that boy. Ah knowed im! Anybody been around this hill knows im, n they know he went fo a bad man. Whatd he do? Now mind yuh now, His brothers a big-shot. Makes plenty money. Got a big car an a fine office. But he comes up on this hill tearin up peoples property if they dont pay him protection. Last night he walks into this wop's place up the 2 street n tries to tear it up. Now yuh know thats a bad man, Canna tear up the wops place. Well, he stepped outthe door n a bunch of them wops show ed up in a car n tried to blow im a way. He had too much New York. Ahm in New York, yuh see?, But New York aint in me! Hell yes, He went n got too much New York, Yuh understand what Ah tryin to tell yuh?

Ah been in New York Twen-ty-five years! But Ah aint never bothered nobody. Aint never done nothin to nobody. Ah aint no bad fellow. Shore Ah drink. I like good whiskey. Ah drinks but Ah aint drunk. Yuh think Ahm drunk. Ah dont talk drunk do Ah? Ah drinking n Ah got money in mah pockets. But Ah aint throwing ma money away. Hell, Ah talking sense, a aint Ah. Yuh heard me way in yonder didnt yuh? Yuh came to me, heard me. Ah didnt have to come-after yuh did Ah? If Ah hada been talking foolishness yuh wouldnt a paid me no mind. Hell, Ah known know Ahm right. Ah got something to say. Ah got something to say n Ah aint no preacher neither. Ahm drinking. Ah likes to drink. Its good for mah stomach. Good whiskeys good for anybody's stomach. Look at the bottle: Mont Vernon! good whiskey. Whut did the saint say? He said a little spirits is good for the stomach, good to warm the spirit. Now where did that come from? Yuh dont know, yuh too young.

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Yuh young Negroes dont know the Bible. Dont laugh, dont laugh. Look here Ahll tell you something:

Some folks drinks to cut the fool

But some folks drinks to think Ah drinks to think.